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The Wisdom of the East Series

EDITED BY

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A FEAST OF LANTERNS

TO
MANY FRIENDS IN CALIFORNIA

"Oh that I could grasp this golden light of Spring, keep it and hoard it—a treasure-trove of days—for my fairest far-off friends."—LI PO.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

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A FEAST OF LANTERNS

INTRODUCTION

IN Spring, "for sheer delight," sang Yuan Mei, "I set the lanterns swinging through the trees." This was no formal Feast of Lanterns held in the first month of the year, but his own private affair, the lonely ritual of a spring-worshipper and garden anchorite.

Perhaps those who loved him—and they were many—wandered his pleached alleys and maple groves and admired the lanterns with their red dragons that leaped and plunged in gold and silver seas; but I like to think that the guests were gone in long procession of gleaming boats when the old rose-master looked on his garden and found it whiter and fairer than the far-off moon. At once you guess the whole charm and weakness of Chinese poetry. Here is the narrow moon-garden of its range, its myriad dragons shoaling through unreal seas, its peonies with the souls of mandarins and chrysanthemums with the shadows of children. Yet this sense of limitation and unreality belongs only to the surface; within

this little space lies a vast world opened to us through symbols.

Moon

The moon hangs low over the old continent of Chinese poetry. Chang O, Moon-goddess, is the beautiful pale watcher of the human drama, and all that she has known of secret things, of passion and pleasure, swift ruin and slow decay, she records in music. Through her great palaces of cold drift the broken melodies of unrecorded lives. She is the Goddess alike of sorrow and love—of Po Chū-i who in exile hears only the lurking cuckoo's blood-stained note, the gibbon's mournful wail, and Chang Jo Hu who rides triumphantly on a moonbeam into the darkened chamber of his lady's sleep. Her rays are more persistent than water; you may draw the curtains and think you have shut out night with all its whispering of leaves, but a tiny crevice will let her in.

Best of all the poets loved her when she lingered above the broken courts and roofless halls of vanished kings.

Time and nemesis wrote large upon their walls but moonlight brought them a glamour unknown to history, and cast a silver mantle lightly upon their dust. They were what Tu Fu and Meng Hao Jan willed—bright shadows in the rose alley of romance; Gods of War and builders of their

dreams in stone. At least one singer prayed the Moon that his passionate heart might haunt the ruins of Chang-An, a nightingale. All sacred intimacies and desires that dare not clothe themselves in words have her confidence, and because she is goddess as well as woman she will never betray them. She links together the thoughts of lovers separated by a hundred hills and the lonely places of despair are steeped in her kindness. On the fifteenth of the eighth month she graciously descends from her "domain, vast, cold, pure, unsubstantial," and grants the desires of all who await her coming.

Lastly, she is the link between the present and the past, binding us in the solemn hours to the men or women who have lived and wrought beneath her spell. One Chinese poet, remembering in moonlight the lovers of long ago, prayed that lovers yet to come might also remember him. Two hundred years had flown, and after a night of splendour some woodman passing at dawn found a double lotus on a broken tomb. And Kyuso Muro, the Japanese philosopher, has written: "It is the moon which lights generation after generation, and now shines in the sky. So may we call it the Memento of the Generations. As we look upon it, and think of the things of old, we seem to see the reflections of the forms and faces of the past. Though the moon says not a word, yet it speaks. If we have forgotten them it

recalls the ages gone by. . . . The present is the past to the future, and in that age some one like me will grieve as he looks upon the moon."

FLOWERS

In the time of the T'ang dynasty there lived a retired scholar whose name was Hsuan-wei. He never married, but dwelt alone, yet his companions were books and flowers, his little friends. If he had any enemies, they were frost and wind and blight and mildew. Three seasons brought him joy and one sorrow. Love to him meant the gentle opening of rose-petals, and death their fall. The neighbours never troubled about him, for how could there be scandal between a man and flowers? No woman ever plundered his garden and desecrated his Temple of Abiding Peace. In fine, he was the happiest man that ever lived.

Then something came to pass. It was "blue night," and the garden never looked whiter underneath the moon. And every tree melted into the spirit of a tree peering between its luminous leaves. The Wu t'ung whispered to the maple, and the maple passed the story round to the mountain pine of the phoenix that augustly condescended to rest in its branches some long-forgotten spring. Only the old willow stood apart and said nothing, for the willow is a wizard,

and the older he gets the more crabbed and silent he becomes.

The owner of the garden stood spell-bound in the moonlight. Suddenly a blue shadow flitted shyly from among the flowers and a lady in a long robe of palest blue came towards him and bowed: "I live not far from here," said she, "and in passing to visit my August Aunt I felt a longing to rest in your beautiful garden."

The wondering philosopher stammered his consent, and instantly a band of pretty girls appeared, some carrying flowers and some willow boughs. According to etiquette an introduction became necessary.

Then a girl in green announced herself: "I am called Aspen," and, pointing to a girl in white, "her name is Plum," to one in purple, "she is called Peach," and so she went on till the last, a little maid in crimson who was called Pomegranate. The Lady Wind, who, she explained, was their maternal Aunt eighteen times removed, had promised them a visit which for some reason she had delayed. As to-night's moon was unusually bright, they had decided to visit her instead. Just at that instant the Lady Wind was announced, and, with a great fluttering of many-coloured silks, the girls trooped out to greet her and one and all implored her to stay with them in the garden. Meanwhile, Mr. Hsuan-wei had discreetly retired into the shadow. But

when the August Aunt asked who the owner was he stepped boldly into the moonlight and saw a lady of surpassing grace with a certain gauzy floating appearance like gossamer. But her words chilled him, for they were like the cold breath stirring the leaves of a black forest, and so he shivered. However, with the true politeness of a Chinese host, he invited her into his contemptible Pavilion of Abiding Peace, where he was astonished to find a magnificent banquet already prepared.

So they feasted and sang, and I am sorry to say that many cups went round, and the Lady Wind became both critical and extravagant. She condemned two unfortunate singers to pay forfeit by drinking a full goblet a-piece, but her hands shook so as she held the goblets out that they slipped from her grasp and fell with a crash to the floor. And much wine was spilled over poor little Pomegranate, who had appeared for the first time in her new embroidered crimson robe. Pomegranate, being a girl of spirit, was naturally annoyed, and, telling her sisters they could court their Aunt themselves, she blushed herself off.

The Lady Wind, in a great rage, cried out that she had been insulted, and, though they all tried to calm her, she gathered her robe about her and out of the door she flew off hissing to the east. Then all the girls came before their flower philo-

sopher and bowed and swayed sorrowfully and said farewell, and, floating through the portals, vanished into the white parterres around; and when Mr. Hsuan-wei looked, lo, the Temple of Abiding Peace was empty as all temples of its kind should be. And he sat down to wonder if it was a dream. For every trace of the feast was gone and yet a faint subtle fragrance lingered as though some gracious and flowerlike presence had been once a guest.

Next night, when strolling in his garden, he was suddenly encircled by his little friends. They were all busy discussing the conduct of Pomegranate and urging her to apologise to the August Aunt eighteen times removed. It was evident that they went in fear of her since last night's unfortunate revel. But little red Pomegranate would have no truck with Aunt Wind, who had spoilt her nice new robe. "Here is one who will protect us from any harm," she cried, pointing to the surrounded form of Mr. Hsuan-wei. So they told him how each year they were injured by spiteful gales and how Aunt Wind had to some extent protected them.

Mr. Hsuan-wei was sorely puzzled: "How can this contemptible one afford protection?" he asked. Pomegranate explained. It was such a very little thing required of him—just to prepare a crimson flag embroidered with sun, moon, and stars in gold and hoist it east of the garden at

dawn on the first morning of each new year, then all hurricanes would pass them by. Accordingly, he promised, and the next day saw him stitching golden stars on a crimson background. And he rose early, an hour before the dawn on the appointed day and set his flag duly towards the east in the breath of a light east wind. Suddenly a great storm gathered and broke. The world rocked. The air was dark with flying stones and whirling dust. The giants of the forest cracked, others were overwhelmed. But in Mr. Hsuan's garden there was a deep calm. Not a flower stirred. Then in a flash he understood. His little friends whom he had saved from destruction were the souls of his little flowers. That night, when the moon was midway, they came to him with garlands of peach and plum blossom whose taste conferred the beauty of everlasting youth. Mr. Hsuan-wei partook of the petals and straightway the lingering drift of old sorrows from the days of his ignorance melted like snow from his heart. And with it went all the pathetic rubbish that even a flower philosopher allows to accumulate. He became young and divinely empty, yet in his soul pulsed the *élan vital* of Mr. Henri Bergson. "Soon afterwards," says the ancient chronicle, "he attained to a knowledge of the True Way, and shared the immortality of the Genii."¹

¹ The full story will be found in F. H. Balfour's *Leaves from my Chinese Scrap-book*.

This story is typical of many. In the west it would be passed by as a pretty if rather naïve and simple fairy-tale. Yet behind all Chinese poetry and folk-lore, underlying all art, is the ancient philosophy of the True Way. And this is the Way of Happiness according to Liu An: "Most men are vexed and miserable because they do not use their hearts in the enjoyment of outward things, but use outward things as a means of delighting their hearts." To enjoy is to have the affinity to understand, the persistence to enter, and finally the power to reproduce. All that we love we reproduce, and so it is with flowers, the best beloved of Mr. Hsuan-wei. It is that delicate sense of touch between life and life, between soul and soul, that alone enables the artist to give—not the imitation of a living flower, but the flower itself, reborn within him, and therefore his own child. And what was this immortality the Genii bequeathed to Hsuan-wei except the sense of eternal youth that comes when kinship and affinity with the little bright children of nature is established? And so the philosopher has joined the immortals, and lives in the sister realms of poetry and fairy lore, and every garden-lover sees him walking by moonlight surrounded by his fairy flowers. Outside, Aunt Wind, that shrill hater of all things beautiful, betrayer of woodland secrets, beats vainly at the magic barrier, a little crimson flag.

DRAGONS

The Dragon is one of the four spiritually endowed creatures of China, the others being the Unicorn, the Phoenix, and the Tortoise. There are four principal Lung, or Dragons: the celestial Dragon, which supports and guards the mansions of the gods; the Spiritual Dragon, which causes the winds to blow and the rains to fall; the Earth Dragon, which marks out the courses of rivers and streams; and the Dragon of the Hidden Treasure, which watches over wealth concealed from mortals. Here, however, we are chiefly concerned with the significance of the Dragon in connection with Chinese art and literature. From earliest times it has been associated in the Chinese mind with the element of water. Most of the great philosophers have used this element by way of illustration, but Liu An, the mystical Prince of Huai-nan, has epitomised all that his countrymen ever felt or expressed on the subject:

“There is nothing in the world so weak as water; yet its experience is such that it has no bounds, its depth such that it cannot be fathomed. In length it is without limit, in distance it has no shores; in its flows and ebbs, its increase and decrease, it is measureless. When it rises to Heaven, it produces rain and dew; when it falls upon the earth, it gives richness and moisture; there is no creature in the world to whom it does

not impart life, and nothing that it does not bring to completion.

“It holds all things in its wide embrace with perfect impartiality, its graciousness extends even to creeping things and tiny insects, without any expectation of reward. Its wealth is sufficient to supply the wants of the whole world, without fear of exhaustion ; its virtue is bestowed upon the people at large, and yet there is no waste. Its flow is ever onward—ceaseless and unlimited ; its subtlety such that it cannot be grasped in the hand. Strike it—you hurt it not ; stab it—you cause no wound ; cut it—you cannot sever it in twain ; apply fire to it—it will not burn. Whether it runs deep or shallow, seen or unseen, taking different directions—flowing this way and that, without order or design—it can never be utterly dispersed. Its cutting power is such that it will work its way through stone and metal ; its strength so great that the whole world is succoured by it. It floats lazily through the regions of formlessness, soaring and fluttering above the realms of obscurity ; it worms its way backwards and forwards among valleys and watercourses, it scethes and overflows its bank in vast and desert wilds. Whether there be a superfluity of it, or a scarcity, the world is supplied according to its requirements for receiving and for imparting moisture to created things, without respect to precedence in time. Wherefore there is nothing

either generous or mean about it, for it flows and rushes with echoing reverberations throughout the vast expanse of Earth and Heaven."

If you close your eyes after reading this passage, you will see in a vision the flight of the Chinese Dragon, soaring and fluttering above the realms of obscurity. He is greater than Leviathan, "that crooked serpent," the storm dragon, greater than Tannin, dragon of the streaming rain, greater than Rahab, devourer of the westering sun, or Babylonian Tiamat, also the dragon deep. For these are the rude imaginings of early religionists, and no more resemble him than primitive scratchings on rock or bone resemble the vast brood of Sekko, who "in olden time fancied dragons, painted them, and spent days and nights in loving them." The former stand for chaos and rebellion, but the Chinese Lung is the ascending one, rising to power through adaptability to change, recoiling upon himself only to produce new forms.

"The dragon," says Kuan Tzu, "becomes at will reduced to the size of a silkworm or swollen till it fills the space of heaven and earth. It desires to mount, and it rises until it affronts the clouds; to sink, and it descends until hidden below the fountains of the deep." And so, from a symbol of spiritual power from whom no secrets are hidden, this dragon becomes a symbol of the human soul in its divine adventure, "climbing

aloft on spiral gusts of wind, passing over hills and streams, treading in the air, and soaring higher than the Kwan-lun Mountains, bursting open the Gate of Heaven, and entering the Palace of God."

'The symbol suggests, and all Chinese poetry is the poetry of suggestion. A poem is not merely inspired, but inspiring. It implies collaboration between the poet and his audience.

Poetry, according to a Chinese commentator, is designed to raise the reader to a plane of mental ecstasy known to the Buddhists as *samadhi*. No great poem finishes when the last line is brought to a close. The poet has merely propounded a theme which the reader continues; "each stanza is but the unclosing of a door whose last swings out upon the eternal quest. Through the glimpse vouchsafed to us we ourselves become visionaries." In most early Chinese poems the influence of Taoism, the nature philosophy of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, is felt. With a philosophy based upon the words of Chuang Tzu, "The true sage, taking his stand upon the beauty of the universe, pierces the principle of things," it is small wonder that the broad stream of speculative thought found its final outlet in Chinese art and poetry.

Its three most precious jewels were Weakness, Emptiness, and Humility, and their earthly counterparts Water, Space, and Flowers. To have the attributes of these three was to become

a Taoist. Artists and poets were the anchorites of Tao, and the secret places of nature their shrines. The savage transports of Alexandrian fanatics, the sensual raptures of later mysticism, and the torture lusts of Indian fakirs never shook them from their indomitable calm. The winds brought them romance from "a hundred moonlit miles," or sped them adventuring on strange waters. For music they had the waterfall and the twilight orchestras of birds preluding the dramas of dawn or shadow plays of night.

The souls of these ancient Rishis and Arhats were caravanserais of cheer for men, and their minds still waters reflecting the brief moonlight, the passing cloud, and the blossom ere it fell. Yet I should be the last to convey the idea that all Chinese poets and artists were anchorites. In the third century A.D. one of the earliest literary coteries known to history—The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove—found a common inspiration in wine. Wang Chi, of the seventh century, was known as the Five Bottle Scholar. Li Po, and his contemporary Tu Fu, were both hard drinkers. Moreover, many of China's greatest poets were also her greatest statesmen. This is especially true of the Tang dynasties which produced Wang Chien, Han Yü, and Po Chü-i, and the Sung, which includes Wang An-shih, the great social reformer and poet, Su Tung-p'o, and, to a lesser degree, others innumerable.

Such a combination would be almost impossible in the West, and it is difficult to recall any name that is associated imperishably with both. Yet the following passage from the writings of Chuang Tzu will show clearly how the men of ancient China attained their dual citizenship and achieved greatness in two worlds through the doctrine of the guarded life :

“Outwardly you may adapt yourself, but inwardly you must keep to your own standard. In this there are two points to be guarded against. You must not let the outward adaptation penetrate within, nor the inward standard manifest itself without. In the former case you will fall, you will be obliterated, you will collapse, you will lie prostrate. In the latter case you will be a sound, a name, a bogie, an uncanny thing.”

And of those who carried out these precepts he says :

“They seemed to be of the world around them, while proudly treading beyond its limits . . . they saw in penal laws a trunk, in social ceremonies wings, in wisdom a useful accessory ; in morality a guide. For them penal laws meant a merciful administration ; social ceremonies, a passport through the world ; wisdom, an excuse for doing what they could not help ; and morality, walking like others upon the path.”

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

“Once upon a time the Emperor Yuen Tsung, of the T'ang dynasty, had imperial ink called Dragon Fragrance. One day he saw in the ink little Taoist priests like flies walking about. They called out to him—‘O King! live for ever! Your servants are the spiritual essence of the ink, the ambassadors of the black pine. Whoever in this world has literary powers must have twelve of us dragon guests in his ink.’”

This is the story of the ink taken from an ancient collection called T'an Ching. Even materials of a genius must be touched with magic and informed with life.

All Chinese reverence flowed into ancestor-worship on the one hand, or into art and poetry on the other. In their religious emotions the Chinese look backward as well as forward. For, as Dr. Hubbard has pointed out in his *Fate of Empires*, “The Chinaman, through the long Chain of those, his own proximate creators, who have gone before him, worships the ultimate Creator.” And something of this ancestor-worship creeps also into his creative art.

“He is haunted,” as I have written of Tu Fu, in a previous book, “by the vast shadow of a past without historians—a past that is legendary, unmapped, and unbounded. . . . He is haunted by the traditional voices of the old masters of his

craft, and lastly, more than all by the dead women and men of his race, the ancestors that count in the making of his composite soul and have their silent say in every action, thought, and impulse of his life."

If you would dive into the well-springs of Chinese poetry you must go deep into its legends and folk-lore. Many of their greatest poems have broadened out from a tiny source. The following, which is after all but a wreath of mist, a puff of wind, and a sprinkle of rain, has nevertheless been a constant inspiration :

"In times of old Prince Wai, who had visited the mountains Kao T'ang, fell into a tired sleep. In his dreams a lovely girl came gliding down and addressed him : ' I am the lady of the Witches' Mountain, a wanderer of Kao T'ang. Hearing that you, my lord, have visited this spot, I fain would spread for you the mat and pillow ! ' "

The prince shared his couch with the fairy, who afterwards, as she bade farewell to her royal lover, faded singing :

My home is on the sunlit side of the Witches' Mountain,
And I dwell on the peaks of Kao T'ang.
At dawn I marshal the morning clouds,
And at night I summon the rain,
Every morn and every night, at the Bright Tower's foot.

Modern criticism has charged many of the great poets, especially of the T'ang dynasty, with being

plagiarists. Perhaps we shall never know how much the poets of a less chronicled age were indebted to the legends and ballads of the nameless meister-singers of a still simpler past, who sang, not for fame, nor even the remembrance of bright hours, but only because their hearts were full of song. But we know that the poetry of the T'ang dynasty contains countless allusions to ancient legend, and Li Po did not hesitate to take some old theme, worn by time and transmission to an echo that lingered in obscure valleys, and sing it clearly to his own gracious music ; so that the old ballad became a modern lyric, or rather revived anew like "the Spring's eternal story, that was old and is young again." He takes, for example, the little four-line poem sung by the peasants of Korea in the rice-fields, and called "Leading with the Guitar." The story is very simple : In Korea, a ferryman once got up early and fastened his boat to a bamboo-pole on the bank. An old man with crazy brain, and hair floating in the wind, appeared. He carried a bowl in his hand, and, stepping into the stream, would pass over. His wife followed to draw him back. She could not reach him. He fell in and was drowned. His wife took a guitar and beat the strings, singing as she did so : "Aged man ! there is nothing by which you can cross the stream." Her singing was very sad, and when it was done she also threw herself into

the river, and died. The ferryman went home and told his wife, Lin Yu. Lin Yu was much affected, and made a poem to accompany the guitar. This was the sixteen-character poem for four lines that they still sing in Korea to the present day.

Li Po took the dry bones of this bare little narrative, and tragedy looks out of the eyes and calls with the voice of the wife: "Old man, there is no way to cross the river. If you venture you may take hold of a tiger, but the river is hard to trust to. The aged man fell in, he died in the river, and floated down the stream. Out upon the sea are great whales; their white teeth are like the snowy mountains. Aged sir! aged sir! will you hang there upon those mountains?" Suddenly the hard and brilliant notes of the song become silent. Grief for the husband is merged into pity for the wife, then the merest cadence follows, with its one eventful line: "That guitar has a sorrowful tone, and there is no returning."

History and legend are more often than not interwoven. An Emperor like Ming Huang of the T'ang dynasty, whose splendour and sorrowful romance still glow in the poems of Tu Fu, Li Po, and Po Chü-i, is immortal. He has but to step over the borders of his empire into hero-land. He sails with his imperishable consort in the black-winged junk seamed with stars on a far quest to the Fortunate Isles. And lonely fishermen drift-

ing through the sea-mist have brushed with their keels the shores of P'eng Lai, Island of the Blest, and heard the tones of a lute of jade and the voice of His celestial Majesty singing to the lady Yang Kwei-fei Li Po's Song of the Scented Balcony. The cup of poison given to Liu An by history became the elixir of immortality in legend, and straightway he soared to heaven in broad day, followed by a miscellany of dogs and poultry on whom the cup and its dregs had descended. It is even possible for a name to pass utterly from record of the historians and yet live through tradition. And the poets of China have conferred many a cup of immortality on some faint celestial shadow or fading hill-side ghost.

CHINESE VERSE FORM

In a previous book, *A Lute of Jade*, I have referred to the structure of Chinese verse. It is necessary to remember that the Chinese language is made up mostly of monosyllabic words expressing root-ideas. There are also a sufficient number of diphthongs to give variety. As Sir John Davis points out in his *Poetry of the Chinese*, such words as *sên* and *lên* correspond nearly to the English *lion* and *fluid*. Chinese is essentially a language in which vowel-sounds prevail and the few consonants are far from being harsh. In the literary language, used by all the great poets,

the only terminal consonant is *n*, as in *Ch'un*, and its nasal *ng*, as in *Hong*. The only harsh initial is *Ts*, as in *Tsin* and *Tsz*. There are only about four hundred different sounds in Chinese, and, in order to discriminate between words of similar sound, resort has to be made to tones which are akin to musical notes. Of these tones only two count in the making of Chinese poetry, namely, the *Ping*, or even tone, and *Tsze*, or accentuated, with its three modifications known as Shang-sheng, the rising note, Khu-sheng, the entering note, and Ruh-sheng, the sinking note. These tones, as Mr. Charles Budd points out ¹ in his interesting essay on the Technique of Chinese Poetry, "are used to make rhythm as well as to express meaning." Rhymes occur in the even lines of a poem. In five-syllable verses there is a cæsure which comes after the second syllable, and in poems of seven syllables after the fourth.

Another form of Chinese verse construction is that of parallel lines. This particular form is well known to us in Hebrew poetry, especially the Psalms. It does not follow that each word and line should answer its fellow, but there must be "a marked correspondence and equality in the construction of the lines—such as noun answering to noun, verb to verb," etc.

The following is an example quoted by Sir

¹ *Chinese Poems*, translated by Charles Budd. Henry Frowde & Co.

John Davis in his essay on the Poetry of the Chinese :

A hundred—a thousand, ten thousand projects are hard to accomplish ;

Five times—six times—ten years very soon arrive.

When you have found a day to be idle—be idle for a day ;
When you have met with three cups to drink—then drink
your three cups.

Chinese poems generally consist of four, eight, twelve, or sixteen lines. There are, indeed, longer poems, but the whole idea of a Chinese poet is to condense and suggest. Professor Giles says : “ There is no such a thing as an epic in the language.” As regards metre, the four-character line is chiefly confined to the ancient collection of national ballads made by Confucius and known as *The Book of Odes*. The usual metres of the great poets of the T'ang dynasty were five and seven-character lines. These are called *Shih*, or regular poems. The six or eight-character line is only to be met with alternated with others in poems of irregular metre.

EPOCHS IN CHINESE POETRY

Great dynasties in China made for great art and literature largely under the influence of a national awakening. Expeditions and embassies to distant lands brought back new ideas ; and, above

all, the fusion of two widely different types of mind, the Northern or Confucian type and the Southern or Taoist, prevented thought from becoming too formalised and gave a new impetus to creative imagination. Small kingdoms meant perpetual warfare and militarism; hence few names famous in literature will be found in the annals of dynasties like the Ch'i and early Sung.

The poetical metres of each age vary according to the requirements of the period. In the beginning we find the short metre of the Odes well adapted to the needs of a simpler civilisation. Gradually, as society becomes more complex, the verse needs grow until finally the five and seven-character line of the T'ang dynasty appears, and after that the form has become stereotyped. The great Sung poets continued the T'ang tradition, but added little to it, and after them only a few flashes of original genius illumine here and there a dark horizon.

The oldest period of all, that of the Odes, has a range of nearly 1,200 years, from 1765 to 585 B.C.

Towards the close of the Chou dynasty, in the fourth century B.C., Ch'u Yuan wrote his celebrated *Li Sao*, or "Falling into Error." He may be called the father of the Chinese nature poets.

The Han dynasty, B.C. 206 to A.D. 221, contains very little poetry of the first rank.

T'ao Ch'ien belongs to the eastern Tsin dynasty, which lasted about one hundred years, from 317

to 419 A.D. This author has been comparatively neglected as yet by Western scholars. Many of his poems would be well worth translating.

The T'ang dynasty, 618 to 905 A.D., is the golden age of Chinese poetry. Most of the famous poets belonged to this period. Li Po, Tu Fu, Po Chü-i, Han Yu, are only a few names mentioned at random.

From 907 to 960 A.D. came the period of the Five Dynasties, with no great name outstanding.

The Sung dynasty, from 960 to 1206 A.D., ranks after the T'ang as the second greatest epoch in Chinese literature. The most celebrated poets of this age were Ou-Yang Hsiu and Su Tung-p'o.

The Mongol, or Yuan dynasty, lasted from 1206 to 1368 A.D., and produced one great poet, Liu Chi.

During the Ming dynasty, A.D. 1368-1644, novel-writing was greatly in vogue, but there is nothing in the poetry of this period that would challenge comparison with the masterpieces of an earlier date.

The Manchu dynasty, which began in A.D. 1644 and only recently ended, contains the names of Yuan Mei and Chiu Tsy-Yung, whose Cantonese *Love Songs*, translated by Mr. Cecil Clementi, are fast becoming a classic.

CONCLUSION

The great storehouse of Chinese poetry is still untouched. Forty-eight thousand nine hundred

are the collected poems of the T'ang dynasty alone, and of these possibly some three or four hundred 'have been translated into various European languages.

As the Chinese have more than 40,000 ideographs, and a good Chinese scholar is one who can commit to memory about eight or nine thousand, the difficulties in the way of translation are obvious. Nor is it easy to find one who is both a profound linguist and a poet as well. One who is so deeply indebted as I am to the researches of the great sinologues of the nineteenth century is conscious of treading on delicate ground even in referring to the relations between scholarship and literature. The fact, however, remains, that with a few rare exceptions, the scholar has attempted too much. Poetry is poetry, whether it be written in Chinese ideographs or European characters, and no knowledge of Chinese will enable one to interpret the poet's message in another tongue. There is an Italian proverb which says that to translate is to traduce, and this is profoundly true of ninety-nine translations out of a hundred. Before one line is placed on paper the translator from the Chinese must have soaked himself in the traditions of the Chinese masters, their reticence, their power of suggestion, their wonderful colour-sense, and, above all, their affinity and identification with their subject. He might well study the methods of the Chinese painters, who

never put brush to canvas before committing all essential details to memory. He might read the story of Wu Tao-tzu, the greatest of all Chinese masters, as told by Mr. Laurence Binyon in *The Flight of the Dragon*: "He was sent by the Emperor to paint the scenery of a certain river. On his return, to every one's surprise, he had no sketches to show. 'I have it all,' he said, 'in my heart.'"

The poems I have chosen to render belong chiefly to the school of landscape. This does not mean that Chinese poets avoided the grim realities of life and the ceaseless struggle for existence. Poets as far apart as Chu Yuan in the fourth century B.C. and Li Hua in the ninth century A.D. have given us battle pictures which have seldom been equalled. Both these mighty panoramas deal with the pomp and panoply of armed hosts, the shock of battle in the bleak plains of Tartary, and finally moonlight upon the quiet faces of the innumerable dead. In the time of the T'angs universal conscription obtained. Tu Fu, in his famous poem "The Recruiter," gives a wonderful description of the deserted countryside from which all the menfolk had gone. Many soldiers were also poets, famous generals like Yo Fei, more often than not commanders of small military posts on the lonely caravan routes in Chinese Turkistan.

Yet, after all, the deepest feeling of the Chinese